

January 23, 2001

**No Child Left Behind**

# **President Bush's Blueprint for Transforming the Federal Role in Education**

America has known greater prosperity than any civilization in history, but that prosperity is not shared by all Americans. While many parents can demand accountability from their child's school – whether by choosing the school directly or choosing where to live – too many children are trapped in schools with little accountability to anyone.

For over 35 years, the federal government has thrown money at underperforming schools without demanding accountability on behalf of parents. The results have been predictable: Despite \$120 billion in Title I aid, poor children still lag behind their peers in all subjects.

Against the backdrop of this failure, many argue – persuasively – for eliminating all federal aid to education. At a minimum, however, Republicans and Democrats can agree that the federal government should demand accountability on behalf of parents and give parents more control. President Bush's blueprint for transforming the federal role in education is a measured attempt to do just that.

## **Highlights of President Bush's Education Blueprint**

### **1. Holding Educators Accountable**

The cornerstone of President Bush's education blueprint is setting high standards and holding states, school districts, and individual schools to those standards.

**Accountability.** States will be required to develop their own "carrot-and-stick" strategy for rewarding schools and districts that succeed and sanctioning those that fail to teach.

**State-Run Assessments.** Progress of states, school districts, and individual schools will be measured by state-designed annual assessments for grades three through eight. This will allow parents to rate their child's school and will help policymakers focus energies on underperforming schools. A sample of students from each state in grades four and eight also will participate in the nationwide National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading and math tests.

**Special Attention for Disadvantaged Students.** If a school's disadvantaged students fail to make adequate progress, President Bush's plan would first provide assistance to the school to improve those students' performance. If the school fails to make adequate progress for three consecutive years, disadvantaged students would be given a choice: use their share of Title I funds either to transfer to a higher-performing school (public or private), or to purchase supplemental educational services.

## **2. Giving Educators the Freedom to Innovate & Educate**

Federal education funds come with too many strings attached, hampering the ability of states, school districts, and individual schools to focus on their students' particular needs. President Bush's education plan promises to free states from excessive federal mandates.

**Increasing Flexibility with Federal Funds.** As previously noted, \$120 billion of Title I funds have failed to close the achievement gap between rich and poor students. President Bush's proposal would make Title I aid to schools with disadvantaged students more flexible. Schools would be given more options for combining Title I funds with state and local funds, and more schools would be permitted to operate school-wide programs – as opposed to separate instruction for select students.

**Cutting Bureaucracy.** President Bush would consolidate and streamline the application process for numerous federal grant programs, allowing states and localities to redirect resources to the classroom. In particular, the Bush proposal would consolidate and simplify the E-rate and technology grant programs.

**Charter States/Charter School Districts.** Under this proposal, states and school districts may volunteer to have numerous federal regulations waived in return for strict accountability to a student achievement agreement with the Department of Education.

## **3. Rewarding Success**

President Bush's education proposal offers several "carrots" to states, school districts, and schools.

**Accountability Bonuses for States.** States that meet accountability requirements, including establishing yearly tests for grades three through eight, will be eligible for a one-time bonus.

**"No Child Left Behind" Awards for Schools.** Schools that show the greatest improvement in teaching disadvantaged students will receive specialized bonuses.

#### **4. Sanctioning Failure**

If the past 30 years of federal education policy have taught us anything, it is that there is no accountability if there are no consequences for failure.

**Reductions in Funding.** The Secretary of Education will be given authority to cut federal funding of state administrative expenses for states that fail to meet their performance objectives.

#### **5. Helping Parents Choose**

Parents know what is best for their children, and can measure their child's educational progress better than any bureaucrat or politician. President Bush proposes several steps to increase parents' ability to ensure their kids are getting a quality education.

**School Report Cards.** Parents will be provided with school-by-school report cards that show the achievement of students in all groups. This will help parents decide where their child will receive the best education.

**Promoting Charter Schools.** President Bush would provide additional federal funds for existing and new charter schools.

**School Choice Grants & Research.** President Bush's proposal would make federal funds available for new school choice efforts and research into the effectiveness of school choice programs.

#### **6. Assuring Quality Teachers**

Rather than mandate how federal funding for teachers must be used, President Bush would give states and localities the flexibility to use federal money to meet their particular needs.

#### **7. Promoting Safe Schools**

A child who fears for his safety cannot learn. President Bush's proposal would save children from unsafe schools.

**Protecting Teachers.** Teachers would be given more latitude to remove disruptive or dangerous students from their classrooms.

**School Safety Grants.** President Bush would increase funding for school safety and drug prevention grants, both in- and after-school. Religious organizations would not be discriminated against for after-school program grants.

**Choices for Victims of Unsafe Schools.** States would be required to report to parents which schools are unsafe. Children in unsafe schools would be allowed to transfer to safe schools.

**Character Education.** President Bush would create new "Character Education" grants to teach teachers how to promote character-building in the classroom.

## **8. Creating New Reading Initiatives**

**Reading First.** President Bush would create a new federal program, the "Reading First" initiative. Federal grants would go to states that establish reading programs for kindergarten through second grade. As an add-on to the "Reading First" initiative, federal funds will allow states to create reading programs in pre-schools and Head Start programs.

RPC Staff Contact: Michael F. Cannon, 224-2946